

A GENERAL REFORMATION OF MANNERS, THE  
BEST NATIONAL DEFENCE IN THE TIME OF  
DANGER:

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A SERMON,

PREACHED ON THE 28<sup>TH</sup> OF FEBRUARY,

THE DAY APPOINTED BY HIS MAJESTY

FOR A PUBLIC FAST.

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## S E R M O N, &amp;c.

Jonah iii. 8. *Let them turn every one from his evil way.*

THIS pious admonition was given by the king of Nineveh to the inhabitants of that great and populous city, when the Almighty threatened to punish them for their enormous crimes. A prophet of God warns them of the impending danger, and declares, that in the short space of forty days their city should be destroyed. This awful denunciation of sudden vengeance, spread a general alarm over the city of Nineveh. Every heart throbbed with anxiety; every face was covered with the deepest sorrow, and nothing could be heard but the voice of lamentation. The inhabitants of Nineveh bewailed the fate of this devoted city! Struck with a sense of conscious guilt, and apprehensive of the wrath of Heaven, they covered themselves in sackcloth, and cast dust on their heads, and by fasting and prayer turned unto the Lord. Their united supplications reached the ear of Mercy, and arrested the stroke of Justice. That unfeigned humility and penitence which they discovered, prevented the destruction of their city, and saved the guilty inhabitants from ruin. Christians! when the judgments of Heaven are visibly displayed

in our land, we ought also to learn righteousness. Let us imitate the wise conduct of the Ninevites, by humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God. Let us "cease to do evil, and study to do well." That a continuance in the practice of sin, will terminate in the destruction of individuals, of states, and of nations, is as certain as if you had been informed by the voice of a prophet, or an angel of God. Let us therefore resolve to turn from the evil of our ways.

This day has been set apart, by order of his Majesty, in order to enforce the admonition in the text. Let us rejoice, that we are not only permitted to worship the God of our fathers, according to the dictates of a well informed conscience, but protected in the right use of our religious privileges. We are encouraged by the example of the first magistrate of the land, to acknowledge God in all our ways, that he may be graciously pleased to direct our steps. We ought not, like some narrow minded and bigoted sectaries, to call in question the authority of our Sovereign in appointing a National Fast, nor refuse to submit to a decree so wise and good. So long as our king issueth no orders inconsistent with our duty to God, and to our brethren of mankind, let us chearfully observe his mandate, and be thankful that we have an illustrious pattern of virtue upon the throne.

*\* It is not M. A. a sectary?*



We hope, however, that the power of prejudice and superstition is near to an end. The diffusion of knowledge amongst all ranks in society, must remove every vain and idle scruple which has formerly been an object of contention, and establish in the heart the love and practice of truth.

To look up to heaven for counsel and protection in the season of danger, is certainly our duty, from whatever quarter it may be enforced. However we may forget the interposition of Divine Providence, however seldom we meditate on his righteous government, it is an absolute fact, that every circumstance in our lives is under the direction of unerring Wisdom. Yes, Christians! our God is the governor amongst the nations: "By him kings reign, and princes decree justice." The revolutions of states and empires are under his controul, and fulfil the councils of his will. If peace extends her olive branch, or war unsheathes the bloody sword, waving it over the heads of affrighted nations; both are under the direction of the King of kings, who ruleth in the earth as well as in the heavens. How soon may the Almighty permit the flames of discord to break out, in order to punish a guilty people! How terrible are his judgments! When once his wrath is kindled, blessed are all they whose hope and confidence are reposed in him. We may consider war as the scourge of God in the

hands of men. By war, and pestilence, and exile, and famine, he punished his chosen people of old, in order that they might turn from their evil ways. Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, let us cease to offend him.

Think not that the Almighty slumbereth upon his throne. His eye continually vieweth the inhabitants of the earth. He pondereth all their ways. He marketh the conduct of those that rule, and those that obey. His arm is lifted up to punish his adversaries. The sincere penitent alone shall escape in the day of vengeance.

Christians! the complexion of the present time is dark and melancholy. Nation rising up against nation, war and rumours of war, seem to justify this opinion, that "the end of all things is at hand." I pretend not to trace the political source of these commotions which at present disturbs the peace of Europe. Such an important investigation is beyond my ability. Nor, from the place where I now stand, will I either justify or condemn the measures of administration, in engaging in the present war. It is requisite to know what passes in the cabinets of the courts of Europe, before a proper judgment can be formed on the present controversy. In one removed at such a distance from the centre of action, and so little acquainted with matters of state, it

would be deemed arrogant and presumptuous to enveigh against the conduct of those who sit at the helm of public affairs, and whose peculiar province it is to watch over the sacred and civil rights of their country. Were these things duly considered, it would prevent much idle speculation amongst the people. We may, with candour and impartiality, scrutinise the conduct of our rulers, so far as we are competent to judge of their actions : if we exceed this boundary, ignorance may lead us into error, and presumption hurry us into crimes. One thing is abundantly obvious, that peace, when it can be maintained with safety and honour, is infinitely preferable to war.

It is a precept of our holy religion, to live at peace with all men, as far as possible. It is equally our duty to defend our country from every impending danger. If a Roman reckoned it an honour to die for his country, we trust that the same spirit of patriotism animates the soul of every true Briton. Should any foreign power whatever threaten to deprive us of our invaluable rights as men ~~and as~~ Christians, who would not arm in defence of his country ? Who would not protect the dearest interests of his family with the last drop of his blood ?

I may venture, however, to assert, that there can be but one opinion in the nation



with respect to an honourable and lasting peace. This, without doubt, is the sincere wish of our Sovereign, and of all his loyal subjects. Although I have declined to hazard an opinion concerning the political cause of our present dissensions, yet I make no hesitation to declare, that sin is the moral source of all our national calamities, By reason of our iniquity, the land mourneth. It is this baneful principle which setteth the nations at variance with one another, and causeth the widow to weep over her husband slain, and her children lost. Instead therefore of rashly censuring or condemning our rulers, let us search and try our own ways; for we, as individuals, contribute to that general mass of corruption which Heaven now threatens to punish. Let us, with full purpose of heart, turn unto the Lord. If the prayer of one faithful person availeth much; if, whilst the arm of a Moses is lifted up, the Israelites prevailed; what happy consequences may we not expect, when thousands this day, throughout the land, are directing their supplications to Heaven, and earnestly imploring that every impending evil may be ~~averted~~, and our civil and religious privileges preserved to the latest ages? Let us hope that the Almighty yet waiteth to be gracious, and will receive into his favour all such as turn from their evil way.

*averted*

In what remains of this discourse, I



shall endeavour to point out some of those particular sins which disgrace us as a nation, and recommend an universal reformation of manners, as the most effectual means to save us from destruction. And whilst I am thus engaged, I hope each of us will be convinced, that sin is the reproach of our nature; and resolve, that as formerly we have done iniquity, we will do so no more. If we make this wise and suitable application of the subject, this day of solemn humiliation will promote our present peace, and secure our future happiness. To amend the heart, and reform the conduct, is the true end and design of religious fasting. Let us therefore be seriously engaged in the discharge of this important duty. Let us not mistake the shadow for the substance, by placing too much confidence in external ceremony. Bodily exercise profiteth little; but real godliness, which comprehends sincere and unfeigned repentance, is profitable unto all things, "having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." It is not to hang down the head like a bulrush, to smite upon the breast, or assume a dejected countenance, that constitutes repentance in the sight of God. Though tears and lamentation well become the true penitent, they are not always infallible indications of inward contrition. Some, from a natural softness of disposition, have tears to shed on the

slightest occasion. They pretend to weep on account of their sins, while they feel no secret remorse; whereas others cannot display these external marks of sorrow, though pierced to the heart with the sharpest arrows of conscious guilt. To turn every one from his evil way, is the best evidence of unfeigned repentance. I am fully sensible, that it requires a gentle hand, and the exercise of much prudence, to touch the failings of humanity; lest, by too much severity, we irritate, rather than soothe the mind of the offender; or, by a mistaken lenity, harden him in guilt. From the general view which I take of this subject, I hope none will be offended; truth requires no apology; and we ought neither to be afraid nor ashamed to declare the whole council of God.

It is a just observation, that as we are sometimes naturally disposed to the exercise of a particular virtue, so we are also, from constitution and habit, inclined to the practice of some particular vice. There is a sin that more easily besets us. It is of importance, not only to know where our strength lieth, but also in what quarter we are most exposed to danger. He must be a very careless observer of what passes in his own mind, who can remain ignorant of his predominant vice. This is the evil way from which every one ought to turn with manly fortitude. Think not, my

friends, that to overcome vicious habits is impossible. Make a vigorous effort, and by the assistance of God, you shall be more than conquerors. The contest which has been obstinately maintained, adds joy to the triumph. How mean and contemptible to become the slave of evil habits! How disgraceful to our reason, and all those powers of mind with which our Creator has endowed us! Shall we, like madmen, amuse ourselves with the chains that bind us to the earth, or boast of our liberty when our minds are enslaved. Let us endeavour to break this fatal chain, and aspire to the "glorious liberty of the sons of God." Remember, that if we err from the rule of duty, we have not even the shadow of an excuse to urge, in order to extenuate our guilt. "He hath shewn thee, O man, what is good." By the dictates of reason and conscience, the Almighty, in some measure, has taught us our duty; and these natural principles are strengthened and confirmed, by a revelation from Heaven. In the sacred volume of inspiration, we are expressly commanded to reverence, love, and obey the Author of our existence, and to pour out our hearts before him in prayer and thanksgiving. We are exhorted to pay a due regard to his precepts, and to respect all his positive institutions. We are commanded to cultivate the love of justice, of mercy, and of truth; to contribute to



the public good ; and, as far as possible, to promote the general happiness of mankind. We are also strictly enjoined to keep our appetites and passions under the controul of reason, and, with gratitude and moderation, enjoy the gifts of the divine bounty. Have we yielded a constant and chearful obedience to these laws of Heaven ? By comparing our temper and conduct with these immutable rules of duty, we may discover wherein we have offended, and what are those evil ways which we ought carefully to avoid.

You have heard, that we are commanded to reverence and adore the Supreme Being ; but is not a neglect of God and of religion, one of the reigning vices of the age ! How is the sacred name of God blasphemed in every corner of our land ! The ear of delicacy and sensibility is wounded by those horrid oaths and imprecations which are uttered by the mouths of the profane. Not content with devoting their own souls to destruction, they deal damnation to all around them. How great is the patience and forbearance of the Almighty, in not hurling instant vengeance on the heads of such daring offenders ! They may harden themselves in iniquity, and set Omnipotence at defiance ; but “ although judgment against these evil works be not speedily executed, the



Lord will not hold them guiltless who take his name in vain."

Though few or none have so perverted the principles of their nature, as to call in question the existence of a Deity, yet a spirit of infidelity abounds in the land. When we hear a member of the French Convention affirming, that death is an eternal sleep, and the soul perisheth with the body, we shudder at the impious expression, and can scarcely restrain the feelings of indignation. But, my friends, are not sentiments equally repugnant to the honour of God, and the interests of society, entertained among ourselves. "All men have not faith." The doctrines of our religion shrink not from a candid investigation; when weighed in an even balance, they will not be found wanting. Sophistry may attempt to elude the force of the strongest arguments, and scepticism entertain its doubts of the plainest facts; but truth must maintain its eternal existence, though we can neither persuade the one, nor convince the other.

From despising the doctrines of religion, we are led by an easy transition to neglect its precepts. In many of our populous cities, the Sabbath is scarcely to be distinguished from any other day of the week. Those amusements, which formerly were indulged in private, have now the

shameless effrontery to appear before the public eye. Would to God that those sources of corruption had not diffused their noxious streams to the remotest parts of the country ! Example is always more powerful than precept. The most pointed reproof cannot restrain the lower orders of society from imitating the vicious manners of the great. In every little village the Sabbath is profaned. Even the establishment of Sunday schools fail to produce the desired effect ; whilst parents either neglect to embrace this opportunity of their children's improvement, or seem careless of their behaviour when removed from under the eye of their teachers. Before we can reasonably expect a reformation of this abuse, the example must come from the parents and guardians of youth. If those who are grown up to manhood violate the Sabbath, and trample upon the laws of God, small hopes can be entertained of the virtue of the rising age. How many secretly wish that, as in a neighbouring nation, the Sabbath might only return every tenth day ! Nay, how many would rejoice were it totally abolished !

If we have not, through a principle of false and ungovernable zeal, demolished our churches, and defaced our altars, we at least have shewn our contempt of religion, by scoffing at its most sacred institutions, or turning them into acts of licentiousness. Is not

the table of the Lord most grossly profaned, when surrounded by those persons who taste the sacred symbols of Christ's body and blood, not with a view to remember, with pious gratitude, this generous Benefactor of mankind, nor reflect upon the blessings of redemption, but in order to qualify them for discharging some civil office in the state. Reason, and religion, and justice, call loudly for the repeal of such acts as support this unholy practice; and we hope that a wise and judicious legislature will soon comply with the request.

We have not only to regret those corruptions of Christianity; are we not also highly criminal, in paying so little attention to the public worship of God? How few are to be found "asking the way to Sion," or forming a resolution to "join themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten!" We reckon it a distinguished honour to be ushered into the presence of an earthly monarch, and to receive the smallest token of his regard; but is it not infinitely more honourable to worship at the footstool of the King of kings, and enjoy the smiles of his friendship! We may be exalted to this dignity, and enjoy this happiness, if we frequent his temple. There he manifests himself to his people in a peculiar manner, and makes all his goodness pass before them. Yet notwithstanding those unspeakable advantages which attend



the devout worshippers of God, how few engage in the delightful service! Our levees and assemblies are well attended; there the wealthy and the great display the pomp of majesty, and the parade of dress. Our senates and our theatres are so crowded when an *Erskine* is to plead, or a *Siddons* act, that trampling unto death, or suffocation by the pressure of the thronging multitude, are no uncommon circumstances. There is no such anxiety or zeal discovered in filling the house of the Lord. A royal proclamation may induce many, this day, to visit the sanctuary, rather to testify their loyalty and obedience to their earthly Sovereign, than from a persuasion that a spirit of penitence and reformation may avert the judgments of Heaven. Except on particular occasions, when we wish to indulge our curiosity, or gratify some meaner passion, there is little or no competition to occupy the chief seats in our Christian synagogues.

But, my friends, is not religion, or the care of our souls, the one thing needful? Every thing ought to yield to this important concern. This is the pearl of inestimable value, more precious than all the treasures of the East. Whatever is pleasant or desirable in human life, is the gift of religion. "Length of days are in her right hand, and in her left riches and honour." It is religion which in a great measure distinguisheth man from the inferior animals.



As the innate sense of a Supreme Being forms a prominent feature in the character of man, so to allow this principle its full force on the mind, constitutes his chief honour and happiness. Christians! we are now in a land of exile; religion is the path that leadeth to the heavens. Amidst all the storms and tempests of human life, this is the anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. A brighter star than what appeared to the Eastern sages, now shines in our sky; if we follow its direction, we shall be conducted beyond the city of Bethlehem, where they beheld the infant Jesus lying in a manger, to that throne in the heavens where he reigns in glory. When threatened with danger, religion is our only shield; it sweetens the bitter cup of affliction, and makes the Christian rejoice even in tribulation. In the public walks of life, religion is the guardian of happiness; and in the unfrequented paths of solitude, a chearful companion, and an improving friend. While religion adds a real dignity to greatness, it also ennobles the poor man, by making him despise riches as a source of happiness, and conferring upon him the more invaluable blessings of contentment and peace. It is the fairest ornament of youth, and a crown of glory to the hoary head. Religion smoothes our passage to the tomb, enlightens the dark valley of death, and consigns the departing spirit to the care of those guar-

dian angels "who are sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation." Say then, my friends, if we ought not to cherish this fair daughter of Heaven, sent down from above to purify our hearts, dignify our natures, and prepare us for the society of angels in the paradise of God. Let the arrogant and presumptuous sons of infidelity exclaim, Who is the Almighty, that we should obey his voice; but let us form the more noble and manly resolution, that we will serve the Lord. If we fear God, we have nothing to dread from the power of man. If we continue faithful in his service unto death, we shall receive the crown of life.

But ingratitude to God, and rebellion against his righteous government, are not our only sins as a nation and people. Is not a spirit of pride, and ambition, and contention, prevalent amongst us! This is the source of much domestic unhappiness, and public shame. Pride originates from ignorance and want of reflection. The man who is properly acquainted with himself, cannot be proud. Riches, considered in themselves, confer no real honour on their possessors, and are only desirable as means of promoting the happiness of mankind, when wisely improved. Rank and titles are mere shadows, which obscure rather than add lustre to character, unless they are the reward of merit,

or accompanied by virtue. Let us learn to despise such adventitious distinctions. Let us build our reputation on a firmer basis. " Riches are not for ever, nor does the crown endure through all generations."

Pride is not peculiar to those who occupy the higher ranks of society, nor confined to the mansions of the great, or the palaces of kings. There, indeed, it may appear more conspicuous, and attract the eye of public observation; yet it often maintains as great an ascendancy in the breast of the peasant who inhabits the smoky cottage, as in him who sitteth on a throne. Let us take care, lest, while we rashly censure and condemn this principle in others, we ourselves be not under its pernicious influence. Far from esteeming every one better than ourselves, which is an infallible token of humility, are we not ready to entertain the vain and flattering idea, that we possess qualities superior to our equals; and even sometimes to exalt our own character and reputation on the ruins of a brother's name? This justifies our former remark, that pride is as frequently the companion of poverty, as the attendant of wealth and greatness. In whatever character or shape it appears, it is truly despicable. " Pride was not made for man." The rich and great can only rise by humility. He who, through a spirit of pride, overlooks or despises his fellow crea-

tures, though he may command the fawning compliments of his dependents, will neither receive external homage, nor inward respect, from the rest of mankind. A person may easily know in what estimation he is held by the world, from the opinion he entertains of it. Let us all be persuaded to abandon this evil principle, which exposeth its votaries to many dangers, and makes them sometimes submit to the meanest and most contemptible things. Let us cultivate that humility which will make us rise in the esteem of the virtuous and the good, and which at last shall be exalted to the heavens.

Intimately connected with pride, is the spirit of ambition and contention. If pride be the parent of the one, the relation which it bears to the other is sufficiently obvious. The love of power and of conquest, forms the most distinguished features in the character of the ambitious. The whole world is not sufficient to satisfy his unbounded desire. This ungovernable spirit prompteth to many bold and hazardous undertakings. It also frequently leads to acts of cruelty and oppression. Like pride, it is not confined to any particular department of society, but diffuses itself through all ranks and denominations of mankind. In the farmer, it appears in joining house to house, and field and field. The merchant, from the same principle, extends



his commerce; and, braving the dangers of the ocean, brings home the produce of every clime. Ambition animates the soldier with courage; and frequently presides at the council of statesmen and kings. This restless and aspiring spirit has often kindled the torch of war, and deluged the nations with blood. We ought all to guard our hearts against the influence of this baneful passion, which has spread not only desolation in the earth, but also in the heavens. Let us cultivate a spirit of moderation, and be content with such things as we have. Instead of envying the condition of our brethren of mankind, let us rejoice in their prosperity and happiness.

We ought also to check the first risings of contention and animosity in the mind. By neglecting to extinguish a small spark, a whole city may be reduced to ashes. If once we indulge a spirit of revenge, we may sacrifice our peace and our happiness for ever. Yet how apt are we to kindle into resentment on the slightest occasions? An oblique glance, an unmeaning hint, or the most distant reflection on our own character, or on those in whom we are deeply interested, according to the principles of false honour, cannot be expiated but by the blood of the offender. A companion or friend, in the hour of conviviality, by one unguarded expression, may afterwards have the satisfaction of sheathing his sword

in the breast of the man he never intended to offend, or have a bullet lodged in his own head. What egregious folly ! What consummate madness ! Will truth stand upon a firmer basis, or any aspersions of character be wiped off, by the uncertain determination of a duel ! This mode of deciding a quarrel, or supporting truth, is held in deserved contempt by all those whose opinion or approbation is worthy of regard. We ought to consider every real or supposed injury in the most favourable point of light. If we view the conduct of mankind through the false medium of passion, it will magnify the smallest offences into flagrant crimes. The meanest and most worthless of men may resent an injury, but it is the property of a great and noble mind to pardon and to forgive. Let us study to observe this divine precept, " Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

But alas ! how much does an opposite temper prevail amongst us ! The unhappy spirit of discord reigns in almost every quarter of the globe, disturbing the peace of individuals, of states, and of nations. Thousands have already fallen the victims of its fury, and thousands more may sink into an untimely grave before its power be destroyed. War is an evil to be deprecated at all times, and can only be justifiable on the principles of self defence. It is indeed

the source of every evil work. It disturbs the peace and order of society, retards the wheels of commerce, and increases heavy burdens on the shoulders of the industrious citizen. It depopulates flourishing cities, lays waste fruitful fields, and its progress is every where marked by desolation and ruin. It spreads a cloud of melancholy and dejection on every countenance, and hardens the heart of man against his brother. Even the shouts of victory are diminished by the groans of the dying, and the sad lamentations of surviving friends.

But however much we may shudder at its pernicious effects, yet the hatchet of contention is seldom permitted to rest in the dust. In the rude and barbarous ages of the world, and in the uncivilised state of society, it is not greatly to be wondered that mankind should have had recourse to arms, in order to decide their private dissensions or public quarrels; but war is certainly the disgrace of these enlightened and polished times. The progress of science should humanise the heart, and compose the rougher passions of the soul. What a pity, that ever human ingenuity should be exercised in cultivating the arts of self destruction, or that renown should attend the bloody conqueror of the world! Let us endeavour to extinguish the flame of civil and domestic discord, and shew ourselves the real disciples of the Prince of

peace. "Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God."

Injustice and oppression serve likewise to fill up the measure of our iniquities. Though the laws of our country are the natural guardians of liberty and property, yet they are frequently eluded, and their power contemned. The cunning watcheth to deceive the ignorant, and the strong man sometimes tyrannises over the weak and helpless. Civil institutions, though founded in reason and justice, and sanctioned by the highest authority, will have little influence on the minds of those who can violate the dictates of conscience, and the laws of Heaven. Even the most severe punishments which are inflicted, cannot prevent the repetition of crimes. The young offender, when not detected in his first attempt to seize the gains of injustice, emboldened by success, seldom or never stops short, till he hath finished the career of guilt on the ignominious tree. But there are innumerable instances of injustice besides those which have been mentioned. It appears sometimes in characters who are bound, by every sacred tie, to maintain an unshaken probity. But the laws of justice are immutable; they are written by the finger of God on every heart, and cannot be violated with impunity. Those secret crimes which escape human cognizance, shall one day be revealed before an



assembled world. Evidence may now be wanting, in order to convict the perpetrator of some bloody deed, and bring him to condign punishment; but conscience will witness against him when he stands before the righteous tribunal of God. A future judgment is a pleasing, yet awful thought. Oppressed innocence appeals to it, as its last resource. The guilty mind thinks of it, and trembles. Let us all live under the influence of a judgment to come. Then the characters of men will appear in their native colours. Prejudice shall no longer bias the mind, nor avarice betray the interests of truth and justice. Let therefore integrity and rectitude be our constant guides. Let us listen to the admonitions of conscience, which may be considered as the voice of God in the soul of man. "Let us turn every one from his evil way." Let us be faithful to God, and just and true to all mankind.

We ought likewise to abstain from every act of oppression and cruelty. Providence has wisely appointed a subordination of ranks in society, not with a view that the rich and powerful should rule like despots over the poorer and weaker members of the community, but that each might contribute to the good of the whole. In every free state, equal liberty is enjoyed; but an equality of rank and fortune is impossible. The virtuous and industrious

citizen will acquire riches and honour, while the indolent and profligate must naturally sink into poverty and contempt. This has been the case in all former generations, and will continue so long as mankind exist on the earth.

When power is accompanied by wisdom and goodness, to direct and influence its exertions, it may be exercised without limitation; but when used as an instrument of cruelty or oppression, its operations ought to be restrained. It would be dangerous in the extreme, to invest even the wisest or the best of men with unlimited power. None who are acquainted with their own hearts, would desire such an important trust. Let us all therefore, according to our stations in society, be faithful in the discharge of every relative and social duty. Let us rejoice, that the greatest are not above the reach of the law, nor the meanest excluded from its protection. In this respect we are all equal.

Let us not disturb the public tranquillity, by any oppressive or cruel act. The poor need our support, the weak our assistance, and the afflicted our sympathy. How inglorious that power which tyrannizes over the distressed part of the family of Adam!

How much more worthy of our natures, to feed the hungry, to clothe the

naked, to support the tottering steps of the infirm and aged, and to awaken the smile of happiness in the dejected countenance! Let us think upon those who languish in the solitary dungeon, deprived of the light of heaven, and the agreeable conversation of their friends, and contribute to their relief. Even those who may have forfeited their liberty in consequence of violating the laws of their country, have a claim upon our sympathy as men and as brethren. While we hold their crimes in detestation, we are not permitted to indulge resentment against their persons. We are naturally taught to respect the unfortunate. His heart must be dead to every generous and manly feeling who can rejoice at the sufferings of an offending brother; and, like the savage Indian, add insult to cruelty. When we behold a malefactor led out to execution, the tear of pity rolls in our eye, the dreadful apparatus of death harrasses up the soul, and we almost forget his crimes. Such are the feelings which distinguish the children of humanity! Yet there are some who pretend to the name of man, who take a barbarous pleasure in such distressful scenes. If our blood runs chill at the thought of such depravity of mind, what idea shall we form of those persons guilty of still greater cruelty, in dragging, every year, thousands of their fellow creatures into captivity and bondage! The Slave-trade has long been the dis-



grace of our nation. It is totally incompatible with the principles of reason, religion, or sound policy. Justice has long blushed at the nefarious practice, and humanity wept over the oppressed sons of Africa. What though they inhabit a different region of the globe, and wear a darker complexion, from the influence of a scorching sun! yet we are all the children of one common parent, and partakers of the same nature; "for the Most High has made of one blood all the nations of the earth." It must give the most sincere pleasure and satisfaction to every benevolent heart, to observe the late decision of the British Parliament, in order to put an end to this cruel and horrid practice. Abandon not the merciful design, O generous and humane Britons! till it be happily accomplished; and set an example of justice and benevolence to all the world! History will record the glorious event, and the trumpet of fame proclaim the glad tidings, in every corner of the globe. The once oppressed Africans, released from the galling yoke of slavery, will bless their generous benefactors; and Heaven itself smile with approbation, to see the children of liberty increased.

Allow me only to add, that whilst we turn with abhorrence from every act of violence and oppression which would render a fellow creature miserable, we ought



also to restrain those evil passions which oppose our own happiness. The Almighty has not prohibited us from indulging our natural appetites; we are however not to exceed the bounds of moderation. Thus far we may go, but no further. And indeed it must be acknowledged, that such a restraint is absolutely necessary to real enjoyment. Excess very soon destroys the sensation of pleasure, diminishes our portion of happiness, and renders the heart insensible to the most delightful emotions. Order and moderation are laws of nature, which both duty and interest oblige us to observe. What does the drunkard gain by drowning his reason and reflection in the intoxicating bowl! A ruined fortune, a shattered constitution, a blasted reputation, a premature death, or a dishonourable old age, are the natural consequences of intemperance and debauchery. Believe me, Christians! sobriety and moderation are the very soul of enjoyment. These boundaries are appointed by Providence, not to diminish, but augment our happiness.

Let us all this day seriously reflect upon the dispositions of our minds, and the tenor of our conduct; let us resolve to forsake every evil way. Your time at present forbids me to enlarge upon these topics. Let us allow them a second and more attentive consideration, when we re-

tire from this place. And if we sincerely wish that the judgments of Heaven may be averted ; if we desire our civil and religious privileges to be secured ; if we are the true friends of liberty, religion, and peace ; “ let us turn every one from the evil of his way.” The Almighty still waiteth to be gracious. He is stretching out the sceptre of mercy, that we may touch it and live. “ Now is the accepted time : now is the day of salvation.”

